

averages  
around a dark bar,  
and the grey blonde in bed  
with me asks  
"what's all the noise?"  
and I say,  
"the world is coming  
to an end."  
and we sit in the window  
and watch, strangely  
happy. we have 14 cigarettes  
and a bottle of wine.  
enough to last  
until they  
find us.

— Charles Bukowski

### Suburban Matron, They'll Call Her

SUBURBAN MATRON, they'll call her, and add  
that she was THIRTY-SEVEN. MOTHER OF TWO,  
they'll say, beneath the photo in her  
wedding dress some sixteen years before.  
AMBER EYED, they'll write, FIVE FEET FOUR  
AND SLENDER, under the blurry album-wrested picture  
of her squinting into the hard impartial eye  
of an unremembered summer afternoon.

ARTIST, they'll call me, suggesting Paris  
of the Twenties or the West Coast fable of the  
Fifties; UNEMPLOYED PAINTER, using for proof  
the vicious charcoal I committed one black  
bedevilled day in self-damnation. MARRIED  
ONCE BEFORE, they'll say, DIVORCED; and DEAD  
AT THIRTY-SIX, clapping shut the record book  
on one more swift sanguinolent career.

He will be the HUSBAND IN THE CASE. WAR RECORD  
will hint of hero, and you'll read that in  
COLLEGE he played TENNIS. COMMUTER, they'll  
say, JUNIOR EXECUTIVE, inching up the status



of his job a notch or two. And each toast-munching man who folds the paper to page seventeen, to the **STONE AND REDWOOD RANCH STYLE HOUSE**, will jerk the trigger for him once again.

**TRIANGLE**, they'll call it, in ignorant geometry, giving all the latest figures on the roaring **RATE OF AMERICAN DIVORCE**. And a churchman with a daily column will shake his syndicated head in celibate reproval at the **WILD DECLINE IN MODERN MORALS**; while a noted female expert one quick column over, will tell you **HOW TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE FROM GOING STALE**.

**CRIME OF PASSION**, they'll call it, omitting that the crime, forever alien to all passion, was done long years before, and that two ghosts, their spectre hands untouching, had turned the TV dials and stacked the terrace chairs for winter in the wide garage. Nor will they say that time runs out before it heals all wounds...

**LOVE NEST**, they'll call it, unable to imagine that it wasn't a nest at all; it was a fortress, under heavy seige by days and hours, a sixth-floor citadel walled in by brown-stained cabbage roses and armored with a scabrous varnish, toward which the dying sun assailed machicolations in the cracked green blinds.

And, **ARTIST**, they'll call me, **UNEMPLOYED PAINTER**, mentioning of course the **NUDES** I did of her. None of them will even notice the small canvas in the corner, her face a quarter turned, where I caught the light that crowns the curving bone above the smoky eyelid -- the one I did in urgent memory one autumnal hour when she'd gone.

**SUBURBAN MATRON**, they'll call her, with a neat diminishment in each new detail. They'll never say that loneliness had stalked the seven rooms with her, spacing out



her days in emptied cups, or that desolation  
pushed the buttons of each new machine.  
They won't tell you that she sometimes  
whispered words against those walls of glass...

UNEMPLOYED PAINTER, they'll call me,  
not caring that the long untended  
kindergarten of my life had ended just  
six singing months before, or that a  
hand that followed blindly an unseeing  
eye into an alleyway of isolation,  
had been led forth, unleashed,  
and nurtured into certainty at last.

SUBURBAN MATRON, they'll call her,  
and add that she was THIRTY-SEVEN.  
They won't mention that her skin  
smelled of apples ... and that the molten  
amber of her eyes at certain moments  
changed to jet. They won't tell you  
that she was afraid of storms ...  
and sunsets, and the age of thirty-eight ....

— Phyllis Onstott Arone  
Logansport, Indiana

#### Rooms

A room  
like other rooms, he thought  
but she stopped short  
when she entered  
and he saw it  
for the first time  
from the house next door  
how each thing  
book, picture, chair  
memento pinned